I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

or Mynnār, spoken in the extreme north, and there may be others. A great desideratum for linguistic purposes is a more adequate method of recording sounds, and especially differences of tone, than that adopted for the standard speech, which though sufficient for practical purposes, does not accurately represent either the quantity or the quality of the vowels, and leaves something to be desired as regards the consonants (especially those only faintly sounded or suppressed). These things, no doubt, will come in time. The immense advance which has been made in education by the Khasis during the last half-century has enabled some among them to appreciate the interesting field for exploration and study which their own country and people afford; and there is reason to hope that with European guidance the work of record will progress by the agency of indigenous students.

It remains to summarize briefly the principal distinctive features of this vigorous and sturdy race, who have preserved their independence and their ancestral institutions through many centuries in the face of the attractions offered by the alien forms of culture around them.

In the first place, their social organization presents one of the most perfect examples still surviving of matriarchal institutions, carried out with a logic and thoroughness which, to those accustomed to regard the status and authority of the father as the foundation of society, are exceedingly remarkable. Not only is the mother the head and source, and only bond of union, of the family: in the most primitive part of the hills, the Synteng country, she is the only owner of real property, and through her alone is inheritance transmitted. The father has no kinship with his children, who belong to their mother's clan; what he earns goes

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

MARRIAGE.

591 It is proposed in this section to consider marriage from its social side, the religious aspect thereof being reserved for another paragraph. The most remarkable feature of the Khasi marriage is that it is usual for the husband to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house, and not for him to take his bride home, as is the case in other communities. This arrangement amongst the Khasis is no doubt due to the prevalence of the matriarchate. As long as the wife lives in her mother's house, all her earnings go to her mother, who expends them on the maintenance of the family. Amongst the Khasis, after one or two children are born, and if a married couple get on well together, the husband frequently removes his wife and family to a house of his own, and from the time the wife leaves her mother's house she and her husband pool their earnings, which are expended for the support of the family. Amongst 591 the Syntengs, however, and the people of Maosbai, the case 576 is different, for with them the husband does not go and live in his mother-in-law's house, he only visits her there. In Jowai some people admitted to me that the husband came to his mother-in-law's house only after dark, and that he did not eat, smoke, or even partake of betel-nut there, the idea being that because none of his earnings go to support this house, therefore it is not etiquette for him to partake of food or other refreshment there. If a Syteng house is visited, it is unusual to find the husbands of any of the married daughters there, although the sons of the family may be seen in the house when they have returned from work. Generally in the day-time you will find in a Syteng dwelling an old crone, who is the grandmother, or even the great-grandmother, of the family, also grandchildren or great-grandchildren; but the husbands of the 796 married daughters are not there. The Syntengs seem to have 611 more closely preserved the customs of the matriarchate than the Khasis, and the Syntengs claim that their rites or religious ceremonies are purer, i.e. that they more closely conform to what they were in ancient times than those of the 589 Khasis. Amongst the Syntengs, occasionally, a widow is 765 allowed to keep her husband's house after his death, on con-

1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

INHERITANCE.

The Khasi and Synteng laws of inheritance are practically the same, although in some of the dolooships in the Jaintia Hills there are some slight differences. The War law of inheritance differs greatly from that of the Khasis, and the customs of the Bhois or Mikirs, who inhabit the Bhoi dolooship of the Jaintia Hills, are totally different from those of the Khasis, thereby supplying another link in the chain of evidence in support of the conclusion that the Bhois, or, more correctly speaking, the Mikirs, are of Bodo origin, and not Khasi or Mon-Anams. The Lyngams follow the Khasi law of inheritance. It will be convenient to describe the Khasi law first, and then to pass on to the special customs in vogue in the different dolooships in the Jaintia Hills, and, finally, to describe the War, Bhoi and Lyngam customs.

The Khasi saying is, "*ka jaid ne ka kyntkei*" (from the woman sprang the clan). The Khasis, when reckoning descent count from the mother only; they speak of a family of brothers and sisters, who are the great grandchildren of one great grandmother, as *shi kynti*, which, being literally translated, is one womb, i.e. the issue of one womb. The man is nobody. If he is a brother, a *kur*, a brother being taken to mean an elder brother, or a cousin-german, he will be lost to the family or clan directly he marries. If he be a husband, he is looked upon merely as a *shong kha*, a begetter. In some of the War villages a newly married man is spoken of by the bride's family as, "*u khun ki kniew*," some one else's son. It is, perhaps, somewhat of a paradox under the circumstances that wives should address their husbands as "*kyrad*," or lord. There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that the husband, at least in theory, is a stranger in his wife's house, and it is certain that he can take no part in the rites and ceremonies of his wife's family, and that his ashes after death can find no place within the wife's family tomb, except, in certain cases, amongst the Syntengs. Further, the ceremonial religion amongst Khasis, especially that of the home, is in the hands of the women. It is, therefore, perhaps not to be wondered at, considering the important station assigned to women by the Khasis, that women

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or difference. It is owing to these three different names being used for the same people that there has been so much confusion about Lyngams previously; e.g. at one census they were named *Lyngam*, at another they received the appellation of Garo, and at a third enumeration they were called Khasis. In Section I. the habitat of the Lyngams has been roughly defined. It is impossible to define the Lyngam country exactly, because these people are continually shifting their village sites owing to the exigencies of *jhum* cultivation, which has been described in Section II. Some of the Lyngams preserve a tradition that they originally came from the Kamrup plains. It is interesting that a people, like the Garos in so many respects, should have the same idea as the Garos as to the hills on the south bank of the Brahmaputra not always having been their abode. The Garo legend is that they dwelt for some years in the Goalpara and Kamrup plains after they descended from Thibet, and before they moved to the Garo Hills; and there is unmistakable evidence of their occupation of both districts in the shape of certain Garo villages on both banks of the Brahmaputra for some little distance up the river. If, as I suspect, the Lyngams are an offshoot of the Garos, it is, perhaps, possible that they entered the Khasi Hills much in the same way as the Garos entered the hill district to which they have given their name. The Lyngams are much darker than the Khasis, and possess the Thibeto-Burman type of feature often to a marked degree. It is not extraordinary that they should have adopted some of the Khasi customs, for the Khasis, being the stronger people, would in course of time be bound to influence them in this respect. That the Lyngams observe the matriarchate and erect (some clans) memorial stones is not peculiar, because the Garos, like the Khasis, are also a matriarchal people (to a limited degree), and the custom of erecting memorial stones is not confined to the Khasis, for other hill tribes in Assam observe the practice, e.g. certain Naga tribes and the Mikirs; and the Garos themselves put up carved posts, called *kima*, in honour of the departed. Although there is not much intermarriage between the Khasis and the Lyngams nowadays, perhaps in days gone by there was a mixture of blood, the result being the hybrid race we are now

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

—the *Shyngkup*, or porch, being flush with the ground. The *nengpei*, or centre room, is approached by a flight of steps. There are no windows, except one, which is bored on one side to admit light and air,—this is called the *pongshai*. Both Khasis and Syntengs, like other Indo-Chinese races, are much addicted to gambling, and drinking to excess is a national vice. Christianity has, through the agency of the Welsh Calvinistic Mission, gained a very striking extension, and may be said indeed to be leavening the whole nation. Schools are numerous, and are pretty well attended by girls as well as boys. The Christians, and those who have come under the influence of Christianity, have adopted a high standard of comfort, and their houses resemble English cottages more nearly than the huts with which one is familiar in India.

Agriculture.—The Khasis do not use the plough; they cultivate their fields with a peculiar-shaped hoe, or *mokkhiew*. They cultivate rice in the valleys, the rice being sown broadcast and the fields irrigated often after considerable labour. They also cultivate hill rice on the uplands, which they sow broadcast. The potato, which was introduced into the Khasi Hills by Mr. David Scott about the year 1830,[1] is extensively cultivated and forms one of the principal articles of export. Job's-tears (*Coix lachryma*), several kinds of millet, Indian-corn, the *Sohphlang* (*Flemingia vestita*), are also largely cultivated. The valleys on the southern slopes of the hills have extensive orange groves, the oranges, especially those grown in the neighbourhood of Shella, being famous for their quality. The betel, vine, and areca nut are also largely grown on the southern side of the hills and in the low valleys, these plantations being irrigated by elaborate systems of aqueducts. The leaf of the bay tree (*Tatyrpad*) is collected, and is exported to the Sylhet plains. The Syntengs differ from the Khasis, in that they make use of the plough. Both Khasis and Syntengs are industrious cultivators, and they possess a certain rough and ready knowledge of the uses of manure. A more detailed description of agriculture in these hills will be given in the monograph.

[1] Khasi and Jaintia Hills Administration Report for 1875-76 by Colonel Bivar.

2. *Matriarchal customs and law of inheritance of property.*—The mother is the head of the house, and is both owner and the custodian of the family property as long as she lives. Males can own no property amongst either Khasis or Syntengs except self-acquired property. On the death of the mother, in the case of the Khasis, the family property passes to the youngest daughter. According to some authorities, however, the property would in practice be divided amongst all the surviving daughters. Failing daughters, the property passes to the youngest niece, and failing a niece, to the youngest female cousin. The same

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

611 428 custom prevails amongst the Syntengs. Inheritance to the post of Siem (or chief) also passes through the female line, there being special customs of inheritance for each of the different chiefships.

614 3. The Khasis are divided into clans, or *kur*. These clans are strictly exogamous. Some of these clans derive their names from animals, insects, trees or fish,—*e.g.*, the *tham* clan, *tham* meaning a crab; the *shrieh* clan, *shrieh* meaning a monkey; the *rani* clan, so called from a fish by name *rani*; the *diengdoh* clan, *diengdoh* meaning a certain tree. There are other instances also. In each instances, the clan is said to have sprung from the animal, fish, or tree, as the case may be. There thus appears to be a trace of totemism amongst the Khasis, although now-a-days their totems are not worshipped, nor do people abstain from killing, eating, or utilizing them. A man when he marries does not cease to belong to the *kur* or family of his mother, but his children belong to the *kur* of the man's wife. Frequently the husband merely visits his wife at her mother's house. It is seldom the case that a man takes his wife to his own house, certainly not until several children have been born.

562 As might be expected, owing to the influence of the marriarchate, Khasi and Synteng women enjoy a much greater share of liberty than is usually the case with the sex. Although not wishing to make any general insinuations, there can be no doubt that Khasi women enjoy considerable freedom in their sexual relations. Women do all the trading, and like their Manipuri sisters make all the bazar purchases.

769 4. *Ancestor worship.*—The Khasis propitiate *Ka Iawbei*, the first maternal ancestress of the clan, by sacrificing a pig; they also sacrifice yearly to *U Suidnia* (the departed maternal great-uncle). Also when a family is in trouble, *U Thawlang* (the departed great-grandfather) is propitiated. Ancestors are further worshipped by the erection of memorial stones. These memorial stones will be noticed separately.

844 5. *Birth customs.*—At the birth the navel of a child must not be severed by any instrument made of iron or steel, but by a sharp splinter of bamboo. The placenta is placed in a pot and is kept inside the house till the ceremony of naming the child takes place. As long as the placenta remains in the house, the latter is *sang*, or taboo, to anyone except the members of the family. On the day of the ceremony of naming the child, the father removes the placenta and buries it outside the house. Having done this, the feet of the father are washed with water before he re-enters the house. When the ceremony takes place, powdered rice is placed on a sieve (*u prah*) and a small bow and three arrows if the child is a male, and a *wait* (or *da*) and a star or (cane strap) (worn across the forehead when carrying a load by the Khasis), if the child is a female.

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from the wife of mother's brother by a term denoting relationship through the father. The mother's brother's wife was stated by my informants in Mawphlang not to be denoted by the term "Kha" or "Knia Kha" which was applied only to the father's sister. She was merely Knia.

(*d*) A man and his wife applied to the brothers and sisters of the spouse, with one exception the same terms (with a term added to qualify) of relationship as for own brothers and sisters. This practice is extended also to the children of these relatives. The exception occurs with regard to the term used by a man toward's his sister's husband, and by the latter to him. It is a single special term, the distinction extending to the term of address. In the other cases, the qualifying term even is dropped in address and no distinction is then made between a sister and the wife's sister, or a brother and the husband's brother.

In order to appreciate the significance of features of Khasi Kinship, it is necessary to note in brief, the rules of descent, inheritance, and succession among the Khasis. An excellent summary of these have been given by Gurdon. The rules of inheritance and land tenure have been further elucidated by Cantlie and others in the work already mentioned. I shall illustrate essential points in the next chapter with reference to the genealogies included in this paper, and also note certain additional details which were observed by me.

Abbreviations used in the kinship table are those employed in an earlier paper. They are noted below :—

F—father.	M—mother.	B—brother.
S—sister.	Z—son.	D—daughter.
H—husband.	W—wife.	C—child.
e—elder.	y—younger.	o—older.
m.s.—man speaking.	w.s.—woman speaking.	

The prefixes U and Ka have not been noted in the case of most of the kinship terms as superfluous.

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[p.19]

CHAPTER II

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Descent, among Khasis, is counted through the mother; residence is also matrilocal. A woman lives with her mother from her birth until some time after her marriage. After one or two children have been born her husband may build for his family a house on the village land, in the village of the wife; this house becomes her property. The ancestral house goes to the youngest daughter. In the absence of a daughter the next youngest sister's youngest daughter becomes the heiress. Rarely, a man will take his wife to his mother's village. This case will be considered later.

A man is born, in the house of the mother's mother, or if the parents have built a separate house, in the house of his mother. He continues to live there until his marriage, when he generally goes to live in the wife's mother's house, whether it is in the same village or a different village.

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The myntri U Subu Rai married in the village of Mawphlang, where his mother also lived, and built the house, which is known as his house. It is, technically, the property of his wife Ka Shyrngeh and will be inherited by Ka Dhuibon, and thereafter, by Ka Elistima. The house of U Subu Rai's mother, Ka Jin has been inherited by Ka Eiribon, and will go in the next generation to Ka Pres. If the latter has no daughters, the property will go to Ka Drel and failing her heiress, to Ka Phre and then to Ka Lamih. If she has no issue, it will pass to her sister Ka Lasuk and so on to Ka Lajer. If Ka Lajer has no daughters, the property will go to Ka Jem's family to her youngest daughter Ka Aibon. As she has only sons, the next heiress will be Ka Synon, and if she predeceases Ka Aibon or has no daughters, the girl Ka Risibon will inherit next. If

13: Mukherjee E-5 (1954)1958 AR7 Khasi AR7

SOCIAL GROUPINGS AMONG THE KHASIS OF ASSAM

by BHABANANDA MUKHERJEE

Dept. of Anthropology, Govt. of India

Calcutta

(Received on 20th October, 1957)

Introduction

THE Khasis, who inhabit the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam, are matrilineal. Like the Garos, they, are matrilocal in residence. Exclusive ownership over family property is claimed by the Khasi women and the youngest daughter (*Ka-Khadduh*) who lives permanently in the house of her mother, is the custodian of the family property and the holder of religion (*Ka bat ka-niam*)[1].

This paper deals with the social groupings, namely, the clan, sub-clan and family, of the Khasis. The materials were collected in 1954 from Mawphlang, Cherapunji and Mamluh and Mawsmai villages farther south of the Chera State.

Discussion

In the language of the Khasi, the prefix *Ka* is usually used before the name of a woman or any object belonging to a woman (or considered feminine). The use of *Ka* as a prefix before the name of each social group is suggested to have bearing on Khasi matriliny. *Kur* is not a very expressive and exact term for a clan. *Kabur*, which is supposed to have sprung from the woman (*long jaid na ka kynthei*)[2] is more exact. Similarly, *Ka-K'poh* and *Ka-iing* denote the sub-clan and family respectively.

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[1] Gurdon, P. R. T., *The Khasis*, London, 1914 p. 88.

[2] Op, cit, page 82.

[p. 122]

IV. THE PLACE OF THE KHASI IN THE WORLD.

By

David Roy

131 The Khasi country lies in the hills of the province of Assam in North East India. Khasi clans [64] [61] are exogamous and matrilneal, and the Khasis speak a [197] MonKhmer language.

121 In speaking of the place of the Khasi in the world I intend to explain the Khasi's own view of his relation to other peoples of the world.*

829 The Khasi is very conscious of his importance. He says a Khasi claims to be the centre of the world. The Khasi has acquired such a feeling of self-importance from his great confidence in himself; and this confidence he has derived from the position in which his relationship-terminology represents him as standing with respect to himself and the world around him. Or, rather, his relationship terms and language are an expression of his attitude and notions.

601 The Khasi says—*Ka Kamie* (mother)

U Khun (son) — *Ka Kmie* (mother)

Which is—His mother

Himself (male) — His sister (female)

He calls this the family. Then he says—

Ka Kamie Kha (Father's mother)

U Kpa Kha (Father, Father's brother) (male) — *Ka Nia Kha* Father Father's sister (female)

[114] * The writer of this article is himself a Khasi (Christian).

14: Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

human beings all over the four quarters of the globe (*ehi snieh ka pyrthei*) with whom, in the world, he can give in marriage and take in marriage, shows the nature which is believed to be innate in the Khasi, and his supposed power of moulding the world. His nature is to grow and to resist, to extend and spread out. It is against his idea of life to remain narrow or limited and resourceless. He is not to be made small or made an orphan, it will not do for him and his idea of the world to '*sah khlem khun kelem kti*,' stay without kind and species, without child, without issue. A couple would even seek to separate if there are no children of the union. His idea is, so to say, 'imperialistic,' to sow and spread out. As I wrote elsewhere, "A Khasi marries men and women of all races; to his Khasi parent the issues are all one and the same without any distinction of caste or creed or colour or possessions. The children are the 'khun kha' (*khun* = child, *kha* = born, i.e. children who are born through the union of a descendant of the parent with a descendant of another parent), and these children are unified into families and are assimilated, in the Khasi idea of life, while these groups of families are traced to their mother and are made to revolve on this ancestress as the pivot of their existence."

156 602 609 186 [586] 611

Thus the Khasi shows :—

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One one side – mother

Son—mother

which is, – mother

the son of one's own – his kinswoman

On the other side also he shows – mother

Son – mother

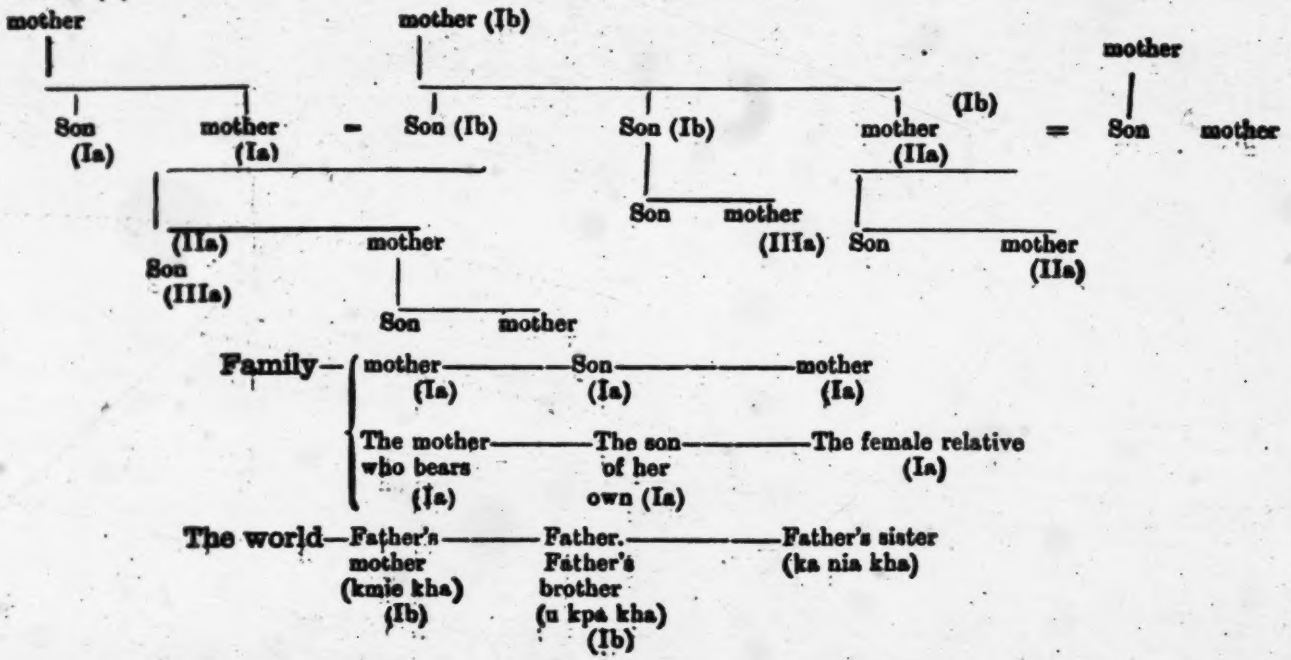
which is – Father's mother

the son of others his kinswoman

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In their midst the Khasi places himself always as the son of the world, thus—

Table (3)



For the species to increase and continue he says, Here—

The mother to bear and give birth—	—	The son of others	The aunt *ka nia kha* (father's sister)	Ia Ib

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For the house to continue and the world to remain he says, Here—

The aunt *ka nia kha* (father's sister)	—	The son *u khun kha* (son of brother of ka nia kha)	The cousin *ka bakha* (daughter of *ka nia kha*) father's sister)	Ib IIa

For the person (*rngiew*) to crystalise, and the stature (rynieng) to remain he says, Here—

father's mother (*ka kmie kha*)	—	The son *u khun kha* (son of brother of *ka nia kha*, who is grandson of *ka kmie kha* (father's mother)	The cousin *ka para kha* (daughter of father's brother)	Ib IIIa

The Khasi knows the 'sang' (*sacra*, sacred, that which is forbidden as sacred). He has experimented and therefore he says *ka sang iap* (*lit.*, that which is 'sacred' or forbidden or taboo unto death) in the case of those who committed incest in the same *jaid*, kind, species, that is, those of the *a* group. It is sacrilege. There is no greater punishment than for this sin,—a punishment so severe that the Khasi will not permit the bones of these transgressors to enter the family cairn. Similarly they regard as an act of sacrilege for children of brothers (*shi para kha*) to inter-marry. Thus the Khasi regards as 'sacred', that is, forbidden or tabooed, for those who are sprung of or connected through the same womb, and for those who are generated of and are suspended from or strung to one umbilical cord in origin, to marry. That is they regard as *sang* for the *a*+*b* man—woman group to marry the *b* son. [see Tables (1) & (2)].

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15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

absence of A, D, E, K and N, U succeeds to the office if he is grown up. If U is too young, a chance arises for F's husband, if F is alive, if not, for M's husband.[1] In the event that none of these males be available, finally the office is taken by F and then by M. It should be noted that the office assumed by F's husband, M's husband, F or M would have to be returned to M's son, as soon as he comes of age. These cases are considered a temporary measure to meet an emergency.

The Khasi follow a strict descent line, and neither a classificatory uncle (or brother) is allowed to take over the authority of the *iing*,[2] though if there is no successor to the property, a daughter may be adopted from the nearest matrilineal descent group. Instead of the adoption of a daughter, the following steps may also be taken. The property is handed over to the nearest matrilineal descent group; or if there is a son, he may inherit his father's or mother's acquired property, but ancestral property should go to a matrilineal kin. In such cases, the particular *iing* actually becomes extinct: in the former case, though the property is handed over to another *iing*, this *iing* belongs to the same matrilineal line; in the latter, the property goes eventually to the son's wife and to his children, i.e. an *iing* of an entirely different *kur*. The latter arrangement suggests that though the Khasi follow the strict descent line, so far as the acquired property is concerned, the child has primary rights over the mother's other matrilineal kin, as expressed by the son's right of inheritance in the absence of a daughter. In this way, the *iing* may become extinct by the death of the female member who has no daughter.

The Khasi consider the *iing* institution as the basic and most important functional unit; it represents also the religious unit which keeps ancestral property and shares a common religious ceremony. This is indeed the key to the whole Khasi social organization.

III. Residential Unit

In this section I shall deal with the relation between the *iing* and the domestic dwelling unit and examine the type of relation maintained between the marital family (husband, wife and children) and the *iing*. Among the Garo, the *nok* corresponds to the actual group of individuals residing within one household. Upon this point the Khasi system is more complicated since spouses of members of the *iing* are excluded from the *iing*.

1. This would only arise in cases where the husbands of F or M live in the same household as their wives.
2. In the case of succession to the chieftainship, a classificatory sister's son is taken in the absence of a direct nephew or brother

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

household are easily understandable in the light of the economic aspect of the fission of the *iing*. As I stated before, the non-heiress is given hardly any share of the property of her natal *iing* on her marriage (if the *iing* is rich a non-heiress and the sons may receive some part), and even if her new household happens to face serious economic difficulty, her natal *iing*, whose authority is vested in her brother, does not usually help her. This fact clearly suggests that brothers can have only limited rights over the elder sister's *iing*.

This is the crucial point of the Khasi matrilineal system. The *iing* is a very restricted descent group, giving opportunities to split off by those who have no right to inheritance. The *iing* has vertical continuity without expansion in collateral lines. Therefore, even the siblings of the same mother do not always form a completely constant unit of a functional descent group, since the elder sisters are oriented by their marriages to form a new *iing*, though they may retain their membership in their natal *iing*. The central core of the *iing* is the particular sibling bond between a sister (the heiress) and a brother (the authority), a pair of statuses. Other sisters are ready to leave and other brothers are fluid members, clearly differentiated in status from that particular brother (authority) and sister (heiress). This structural principle should be compared with other matrilineal descent groups, whose sibling group is based on interdependence between members of a group, not between particular persons or statuses. The structural unit of the Khasi social organization, is *not* the descent group based on sibling links, but the *iing*, though descent is the principal factor, and the limiting one, in the formation of the *iing* institution. The descent factor is delineated by the functional force of the inheritance rule through female ultimogeniture, which results in constant internal fission and segmentation in the descent group. Technically, it is very similar to the process of fission of the Garo *nok* on the unigeniture principle, though the internal structure is different.

The establishment of a new household by a Khasi woman with her husband, means the beginning of the establishment of a new *iing*, separated from her natal *iing* not only in residence but also sociologically. In other words, it is the process of fission and segmentation of an *iing*, matrilineal descent group. Therefore, a woman who has once established a new household independent of her natal household, will not go back to her natal house i.e. her mother's descent group, though her bond with her mother's descent group remains undiminished. Of course she may visit her natal *iing* occasionally, but in fact, much less than her husband will visit his natal *iing*. In this respect as well the Khasi manifest structural differences from the Ashanti as described by Fortes, where a mother goes back to her own matricentral household and often prefers to reside there (Fortes, 1949, p. 77). Even

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7
Garo AR5

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The discussion of Parts I and II reveals that the social structure of the Garo and the Khasi differ greatly. Similarity is found only at the level of the minimum criteria of matrilineal systems: the basic succession rules of mother-daughter, mother's brother-sister's son; and the fact that property is owned by the woman, but the controlling power and authority over it are in the hands of the man.

One of the most outstanding structural differences between the two lies in the composition of a property group: the property group of the Khasi is formed by a descent group at a shallow generation depth, while that of the Garo is maintained by the cooperation of two local lines, each of which represents a localized lineage group. Hence the descent group of the former tends to have stronger solidarity, whereas the latter tends to be weakened in its solidarity.

In a broad framework, in terms of social organization, the Garo fall structurally into a category based on the moiety arrangement, in which patrilineal systems, such as the Murngin, and the Kariera, etc., are also to be found. Theoretically, this type of mechanism is operative in either matrilineal or patrilineal systems: by the exchange of men in the former and the exchange of women in the latter.

On the other hand, the Khasi system presents more outstanding features of a type which is generally accepted as belonging to matrilineal systems. However, the basic structural traits of this system may also be found among patrilineal systems, in terms of relatively stronger descent group solidarity.

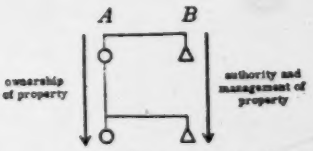


FIG. 12. — *Succession Lines of Female and Male in theMatrilineal System.*

Lines *A* and *B* may include sister-sister, and brother-brother relation respectively, also members of classificatory category; variations in these minor points depend on each matrilineal system.

Though both matrilineal and patrilinal systems may share such basic structural categories, they differ significantly in the following respects: in matrilineal systems, the ownership of property and the authority over the property group never rest in one person, as in the case of the father/husband of the patrilineal systems, and the succession to these two offices follows the female line (mother-daughter) and the male line (mother's brother-sister's son) as shown in line *A* and line *B* in Fig. 12. This duality of office-holding individuals within the succession rule is the intrinsic cause

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7
Garo AR5

of complications and variations in matrilineal systems. The matrilineal system is not a mirror of the patrilineal system; it is a different system in which more complicated mechanisms are involved. This complexity of the matrilineal system is a decided handicap when it comes to resisting radical economic changes. In order to preserve the system, a fairly stable economy is required, well-balanced in its population and resources. This may be one of the reasons for the rapid disintegration or unstability of social organization of matrilineal peoples in the world.

The difficulty of preserving in function both lines *A* and *B* is caused by residential problems—individual marriages which contradict the sibling cohesion. According to my theoretical analysis, there are four alternative ways of resolving such contradictory factors, each case being represented by actual ethnographic samples.[1] Each arrangement represents a different degree of the function of the two lines *A* and *B* in relation to the residential pattern, as following (see Fig. 13):

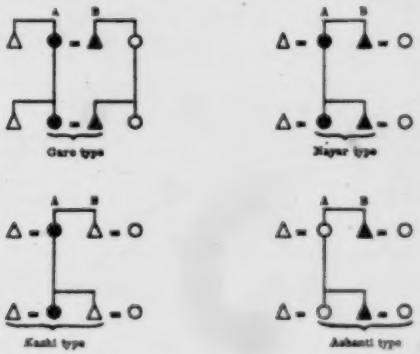


FIG. 13. — *Central Core of Matrilineages in Relation to Property Groups and Residential Groups.*

The Garo type: The co-residential type is 'husband-wife' instead of 'brother-sister.' The function of both lines *A* and *B* is equally strong. This is kept by the marriage contract between two local lines, so that it is possible to keep the function of each line against the residential separation of the two lines in one descent group. This type is found at the moment only among the Garo.

1. For this discussion I take only such major matrilineal samples for which ample documentation is available.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7 •
Garo AR5

The Nayar type: The counter scheme of the Garo type: the co-residential type is 'brother-sister' instead of 'husband-wife.' The function of both line *A* and *B* is equally strong. This type is found among the traditional Nayar (except those in North Malabar) and the Minangkabau matrilineal people.

The Khasi type: The ideal co-residential type consists of a woman with either her husband or her brother. The function of line *A* is much stronger than that of line *B*. This type is found among the Khasi, the Hopi, the Zuni, the Trukese, the Negri-Sembilan Malay, the Yao, etc.

The Ashanti type: The ideal co-residential type consists of a man with either his wife or his sister. The function of line *B* is much stronger than that of line *A*. This type is found among the Ashanti, the Gwembe Tonga, the Mayombe, the Trobriands, the Nayar of North Malabar, etc.

In terms of the strong function of both lines *A* and *B*, both the Garo type and the Nayar type may fall into a similar category. But as already explained, their structure basically differs from one another, and clearly appears as the counter schemes of different residential arrangements. The Nayar type shares with the Khasi a rather similar structure in terms of a descent group equated with a property group, while in the Garo type the two lines *A* and *B* of a single descent group never form an independent property unit.

If, leaving aside the Garo type, we consider the three others, the Nayar type appears again different from the rest in so far as in it, both lines fulfill an equally strong function, while in the Khasi and Ashanti types, one of the two lines is always more developed functionnally than the other. The Nayar type presents the highest degree of descent group solidarity among the three. This Nayar situation might be compared with that of the traditional Chinese patrilineal systems.[1] In both social systems the structural importance of marriage is minimized: the role of a spouse is only to ensure descendants of the matrilineal (patrilineal) group. The structural importance of a husband (wife) is almost neglected, while the wife (husband) holds the paramount locus in her (his) descent line. The descent group manifests the strongest solidarity within itself, neglecting affinal relations with other groups. This principle results in the custom of the "visiting husband" in the matrilineal system; and, in the patrilineal system, in a total social shift of the wife by her complete assimilation into her husband's group, and separation from her descent group,—she has no social and personal independent locus in terms of the structure. It is an interesting fact that the most extreme scheme of highly institutionalized unilineal systems can be seen among societies of pre-industrialized high civilization. These schemes are structurally opposed to those of the system of the moiety

1. Fortes touches this point in his paper (Fortes, 1959, p. 208).

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7 •
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arrangement, such as the Garo and the Murngin, where both wife and husband keep important social positions as representatives of each descent group.

Leaving the Garo and the Nayar types, the following discussion deals with the implications of the differences between the Khasi type and the Ashanti type. The degree of function of the two lines *A* and *B*, is related to the residential arrangement. A household of the Khasi type includes the matrilineage women and either their husbands or brothers—brother's wives are excluded as a rule. A household of the Ashanti type includes the matrilineage men and either their wives or sisters—sister's husbands are excluded as a rule. Among the Khasi as I have already explained (p. 127), a woman and her brother's wife are never found as members of a common household, while among the Ashanti, as Fortes states, a man and his wife's brother are never found as members of a common household. In the former, since a woman is the centre of the matrilineage, her husband stands socially closer to her matrilineage than she does to his—the husband shares the matrilineage dwelling, while a man being a peripheral member, his wife is excluded as a rule from his matrilineage residence (hence predominantly uxorilocal);[1] the Ashanti type examplifies exactly the opposite case (predominantly virilocal or avunculocal).

The crucial point in which lies the difference between the Khasi and Ashanti types is the rule of inheritance. In matrilineal systems, as a rule, the ancestral property is inherited by the matrilineal descent group. The starting point of the difference is really in the ways of inheritance of the *acquired property* particularly by the husband. So long as a man remains with his matrilineage members, both types show no difference. The crucial difference appears in the married life. In the Khasi type, if a man builds an independent house in which to live with his wife and children, that house and his acquired property during his matrimonial life automatically belong to and are inherited by his wife and children. On the other hand, in the Ashanti type, if a man builds an independent house in which to live with his wife and children, that house and his acquired property belong as a rule to him and are inherited by his matrilineal group, not by his wife and children. In case of divorce or death of a spouse, the difference between the Khasi and the Ashanti types appears most clearly: in the former, it is the husband who leaves, and in the latter it is the wife and children who leave. Hence the residence pattern reflects

1. Among the Yao-Cewa group, which I classify into the Khasi type, a senior brother who is selected for the position of head of a matrilineal family, takes his wife with him. This virilocal marriage should be considered as an exceptional case applied to only such a particular member. Such special arrangement is also found among the Nayar where duolocal arrangement is general rule.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7 •
Garo AR5

these rules, as the Khasi type tends to a uxorilocal arrangement, while the Ashanti type tends to a virilocal or avunculocal arrangement.[1]

In the Khasi type, the residential arrangement is the decisive factor for a man's economic achievement. The men, though they keep close social and ritual ties with their matrilineage, are divorced economically from their matrilineal descent group.[2] On the other hand, in the Ashanti type, where the matrilineal rule is the decisive factor, men keep strong social, ritual and economic ties with their descent group at the expense of the women's and children's residential mobility. However, these women are not like men of the Khasi type; as among the Ashanti, women mostly go back to their matrilineage at a late stage of their married life. In the case of the Trobriands, the wife stays all her married life at her husband's house while her sons go back to her matrilineage, and her daughters leave for their husbands' house at their marriage. This can be considered as the exact opposite of what happens in the Khasi type. The matrilineage represented by men keeps its function and solidarity at the expense of the women. There, the female line (mother-daughter) is broken, in practice, by the residential arrangement, as was broken the male line (mother's brother-sister's son) in the Khasi type. The actual tie of the Trobriand wife to her matrilineage is maintained through the presents her brothers send her, not through mother, sister or daughter. That of the Khasi husband is maintained through his youngest sister or niece, not through his brother or nephew. Thus Trobriand wives and Khasi husbands are marginal members of the matrilineage. These facts show that they sacrifice either the male (*B*) or the female (*A*) line to the co-habitation of wife and husband. Unless they have a structural arrangement like that of the Garo, the co-residence of the married couple is the crucial factor which modifies the matrilineal system.

The Ashanti manifest great unstability in this respect, since they do not like to sacrifice either line *A* or *B*, though actually line *A* is much weaker than *B*. The mother wishes to be with her daughter and son, while the mother's brother wishes to be with his sister's son, yet they do wish to have co-habitation in their marriage—combining theoretically opposed factors. This is also the case which I found among the Nayar in the transitional stage of the disintegra-

1. These arguments do not mean that all members of a society act in the same way; in any society, considerable variations in residential pattern are found in individual cases. What is important here is the model, and the orientation of ideas of the people, the pattern of which is usually followed by the majority of the people in a given society, at a given time.

2. Among the Khasi, though the authority of the *siang* may keep the account and manage his sister's property, his acquired property through his wife's field or his independent economic activity definitely go to his wife and children.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7 •
Garo AR5

tion of the matrilineal system (see Nakane, 1958/B and 1962). In comparison with the Ashanti, the Khasi or the Trobriand type gain considerable stability by sacrificing either *A* or *B* line, which is one of the possible ways of preserving the matrilineal system along with the practice of co-habitation of the married couple.

Another solution of the conflicting situation in such a society is the practice of cross-cousin marriage, as in the case of the Ashanti, which brings two conflicting factors together, the matrilineage and the family of procreation. In this case, the cross-cousin marriage tends to take place between the first cross-cousins centred around each man. Fortes states, "Cross-cousin marriage most often occurs between the children of full siblings or of uterine first cousins . . . cross-cousin marriage offers a possibility of reconciling the conflicting influences of conjugal, parental, and matrilineal kinship ties" (1950, p. 282). This is quite different from the cross-cousin marriage of the Garo, because among the latter, the cross-cousin marriage being practised as the basis of the whole structure of society, it makes no difference whether a cross-cousin is first or classificatory. In the case of the Ashanti and other matrilineal systems of a similar type, such as the Mayombe and the Kongo, it is considered most desirable to enter into a first cross-cousin marriage; classificatory cross-cousin marriage, such as among the Garo, does not make much sense. Moreover, the cases of cross-cousin marriage tend to take place among comparatively wealthy members in a society (see Rattray, 1927, Chapter XXIX). If one has no property in the Ashanti type society, then cross-cousin marriage has not much meaning.

The cross-cousin marriage of matrilineal systems has been often referred to as being the solution to the conflicting situations of a man as a husband and as a brother. I suggest here that this can be applied to the matrilineal system of the Ashanti type; not to those of the Khasi type where men have already given up the role of forming the central core of the matrilineage. In these societies, the solution is already given through the sacrifice of one line. There are no conflicting economic factors, though men are still in a situation of social conflict between their matrilineage and family of procreation. This hypothesis is confirmed empirically by the fact that there are no prescribed or preferential cross-cousin marriages among the Khasi, the Hopi, the Zuni, the Trukese and the Negri Sembilan Malay,[1] where a man is not in economic conflict with his matrilineage and family of procreation. His nephews are already outside his economic

1. "In arranging marriages the preference is for someone 'near'. As cross-cousins are the nearest possible naturally a large number of these marriages occur . . . This preference, however, is not explicitly institutionalised . . ." (Swift, 1959, p. 136).

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR? Khasi AR? Garo AR5

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scope; due to uxorilocal marriage, they have no right over his residence and his acquired property. Naturally the maternal uncle becomes far less important than in the Ashanti type.

Among the Yao, which I classified as belonging to the Khasi type, Mitchell states that in spite of the emphasis laid on cross-cousin marriage by his informants, real or classificatory cross-cousins are found in only 15 per cent of 103 first marriages (Mitchell, 1956, p. 100). The functional importance of cross-cousin marriage among the Yao is particularly evident in the minority (headmen of villages or lineages) who practise virilocal marriage[1] in a society where a uxorilocal arrangement is the general rule; as in the case of the Ashanti, cross-cousin marriage functions as a solution to two conflicting tendencies: matrilineality and virilocality. The Trobriands, though they belong to the Ashanti type, demonstrate the same structural analogy to the Khasi type, though in reverse. Among Trobriand commoners there is no preference for cross-cousin marriage. The much discussed cross-cousin marriage of the Trobriand aristocrats should be considered as the exception, as has already been examined by Leach (1958, p. 139). In this regard the Yao and the Trobriands produce a picture somewhat similar to the Ashanti type, among the minority of society, though the general practice bears similar features with that of the Khasi type.

It has become clear that cross-cousin marriage is closely related to the type of residence, i.e. virilocality, combined with economic factors. Furthermore, the cross-cousin marriage signifies the political importance of the maternal uncle as lineage head. Thus the Khasi type and the Ashanti type represent alternative arrangements to the different locus of the core of the functional body, the matrilineal descent group.

II

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The preceding section has made clear different types of matrilineal systems as far as the *internal* structure of the descent group is concerned. This section deals with the relation of the descent group to the *external* organization.

Both the Garo and the Khasi follow a unilineal system, but they do not have what is called "segmentary lineage" organization, which has been much discussed in the African field. As generally understood,

1. Richards states: among the Yao-Cewa group, a cross-cousin marriage is likely to be found between a daughter of a head (male) of a descent group and his sister's son (Richards, 1950, p. 238). Mitchell states that Yao cross-cousin marriage is one of the solutions for the conflict between the principle of uxorilocal marriage and the principle of male leadership of the lineage (Mitchell, 1956, p. 144).

600 Such variety in residential arrangements and such flexibility in inheritance rule complicates considerably the composition of the residential unit when a property group (residential domestic unit) grows. Richards gives an interesting illustrative description of the formation of a Bemba residential unit:

"The Bemba bridegroom starts his married life as a stranger in his wife's village, but since his daughters remain with him for some years after marriage he builds up a grand-family composed of his daughters, their husbands, and their children. In some cases he is able to persuade his sons-in-law to remain permanently with him, while in others he is even able to keep his son in his own village. As time goes on his sister's sons, with their wives, will choose to come and settle with him, so that he will be head of a group of rather heterogeneous composition" (Richards, ibid., p. 107).

Here we find a man's wife's matrilineal kin (his daughters and sons, including the daughters' descendants), his own matrilineal kin (his children, many of whom will be in their matrilineal sets after their sons' wives and his sister's sons' wives). Such a mixed composition of a residential unit may never be found among societies belonging to those types previously discussed; such residential composition would be impossible if the matrilineal principle was functioning strongly in the structure of the actual property group.

Thus, the Bemba type presents an outstanding structural difference from the other types of matrilineal systems in which the matrilineal inheritance rule was the decisive factor for the formation of the residence unit. It is clear that in the Bemba type, both a man and a woman are fairly free from the economic control of his and her matrilineal group, and their relations are somewhat like those of the husband of the Khasi type and the wife of the Ashanti type. Therefore, the conflicts between one's matrilineal group and family of procreation are minimized, particularly in the economic sphere.

This analysis throws much light on the following remarks of Richards bearing on different aspects of the similar formation of descent groups among the Yao and the Bemba.

"The head of a Yao village of this sort [taking his wife to his matrilineage residence] then has authority over his wife's children and over those of his sisters, but the position of the wife's children seems to be clearly differentiated from that of the sister's children, and Mitchell speaks of a traditional hostility between them. I never saw evidence of such hostility in Bemba villages, which also often contain a man's children and his sister's children" (Richards, ibid., p. 110).

This difference should really be ascribed to the structural difference between the Khasi type (the Yao) and the Bemba type. In the former the matrilineal structural force is strongly-functioning in the residential group, whereas in the latter it is attenuated.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7 •
Garo AR5

Within such a structural framework it is quite understandable that the predominance of virilocal arrangements, coupled with male authority as husband/father, are found. All observers of these societies have noted this feature. Among the plateau Tonga and the Bemba particularly, male authority is outstanding.

"Men are free to move and to form their own households because they acquire rights over their wives which permit them to remove those women from the protection of their kin . . . As head of the household, the husband occupies a position comparable in many respects to that which falls to men in patrilineal societies" (Colson, 1958, p. 64).

"With the marriage the husband obtains—but only for the probationary period—rights over his wife's labour, the right to control her movements, and rights to her sexually. He is the father of any children born to her, whether or not he begets them . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 101).

"So long as the household contains a married couple, it is theoretically under the authority of the husband. *The wife and her children dress the hearth, the* cupwala, but the husband is known as the cupwala, 'the owner of the hearth' . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 103).

"Once the young man is admitted to the family he is free to move his wife and children to his own village should he desire to do so" (Richards, *ibid.*, p. 113).

"This is a male dominant society and, even though descent is reckoned through the mother, the wife is very much under the control of her husband even while he is an outsider in his wife's village" (*ibid.*, p. 119).

The husband/father's authority was also observed among other matrilineal systems under certain conditions, as already fully discussed in the chapters on the Garo and the Khasi, and more predominantly among societies of the Ashanti type where the residential pattern was uxori-avunculocal. However, the ambilateral structure on the level of the household composition may give more opportunity to create a husband/father authority of a more stable kind, unhampered by matrilineal force.

Furthermore, individuals are almost free from the descent principle in establishing their residence. Colson states in her account on the Tonga that a man has complete freedom to choose his residence, and residents in a single neighbourhood need not have kinship ties with one another. In the ordinary round of daily life, membership within a neighbourhood may be of more significance than membership within a matrilineal group (Colson, 1958, pp. 27-28). Oliver describes a similar situation:

"The out-marrying women and their children acquire provisional rights in lands where they reside, and ultimately acquire full title to such lands" (Oliver, 1955, p. 116).

It is clear, in these societies, that there are two sets of groups on different levels: a matrilineal group membership of which is acquired

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7 •
Garo AR5

devices of the existing system. This does not necessarily imply that such societies have or had the same organization as other matrilineal societies, but I believe this to be an economic and historical product of the existing structure. I do not question the fact that all these societies are subject to a process of change; but it does seem unnecessary to assume that every factor which happens to be missing nowadays, did, in fact, exist in the past.

Summing up the above discussion, the essential structural differences between the Bemba type and other matrilineal systems are found firstly in the internal structure of its property group: "ambilateral" contrasting with the "matrilineal" of the Garo, Nayar, Khasi and Ashanti types. Secondly, in the structure of the wider organization of the residential groups: the clear matrilineal principle is found to act in the composition of matrilineal groups. The focus of the matrilineal operation is quite opposite to that of the household-lineage type. In the latter the bilateral features are met with at the wider organizational level. In the Bemba type, in spite of bilateral features in the composition of the residential property group, the rigorous matrilineal group conception is found in the wider organization. Unlike the case of the segmentary-lineage type, this matrilineal group does not have necessarily a direct and actual economic basis. Perhaps the scale of the Bemba society is small enough to maintain the matrilineal social system without a definite economic basis.

In conclusion, such terms as "matrilineal" (unilineal) and "bilateral" are simply convenient labels for the preliminary classification: they should not be used as contrasting criteria for classifying social structure. The unilineal principle (matrilineal system) works differently in each given society, producing as I have observed different structures. Again, *descent* principle and *residence* (with landholdings or property) are equally important criteria for the analysis of social organization. The preeminence of either descent or residence should not be theoretically opposed in the arguments of anthropologists, for different degrees and levels of both factors are involved in each given society.

Finally I should like to note that the five major types of matrilineal systems in relation to the internal structure of the property group, which I presented in this discussion, namely the Garo, the Nayar, the Khasi, the Ashanti and the Bemba types, give theoretical criteria for the analysis. It should not be assumed that all matrilineal systems grouped into the same type present the same structure, but that each possesses the important basic element of its type. Also a system may change from one type to another through important economic changes or migrations: for instance, from the Nayar type to the Ashanti type, or from the Ashanti type to the Bemba type.

clothing, operate the large Khasi business establishments in Shillong, and provide all civic and religious leadership. Women care for children and for the home, do the marketing, and sell dried fish, betel nut, lime, fruits, and rice breads at markets. Other tasks can be performed by either sex. **Land tenure.** Land was formerly divided into sib land and public domain. Sib land was corporately held in perpetuity, and was inalienable except by the unanimous consent of all members of the sib. The public domain was subject to usufructuary right by anyone who kept the land regularly under habitation or cultivation, with a lapse of no more than three years. Most villages grew up on public domain, and then reckoned all land inhabited or under cultivation by a village member as village land. Forests were public, except for sacred groves possessed by villages or lineage groups, and everyone was free to gather branches for fuel. Wastelands and streams were also public. By now, most public domain and village land, together with its forest cover, has been pre-empted as private property and is being rented and sold as such. Sib lands remain intact, unless the sibs agree to rent, lease, or sell. [Cf. Cantlie 1934.]

KIN GROUPS. **Descent.** Descent is matrilineal, and the Khasi is a member exclusively of his own matrilineage from birth to death. Adoption, which is very rare, is only within the matrilineage. **Kin groups.** The maximal matrilineage is the sib; this is a named, widely dispersed, strictly exogamous, lineage group, which claims but cannot trace its origin from a single ancestress. Sibs used to meet as corporate groups from time to time. Some sibs are linked with others in large amorphous groups that are unnamed and are defined solely by exogamy. Such a group is composed of two or more sibs, the ancestresses of which are claimed to have been either real sisters or dear friends who out of affection declared that thenceforth their descendants would be as consanguineals. The origin and function of sib-linkage is now unknown, and today the members of a sib will often disagree on whether or not their sib is linked with another. • The minimal matrilineage is the local descent group, or *ïing*. This is the largest kin group that normally rallies at life crises. It is said that the *ïing* formerly spanned six generations; today, it encompasses only four. If an *ïing* grows to more than four generations in a single village, it segments. New houses are located at some distance from the old and the *ïing* soon forgets exactly how to trace genealogical connection, except for which segment descended from a youngest sister. The term *ïing* may also be applied to an extended family, an elementary family, and a house. The elementary family is the basic domestic unit in Khasi society. In any village there are likely to be one or two households which stand as sole local representatives of the lineage of the female household head. Such a household is known as an

17: Banerjee E-5 (1955) 1962 AR7 Khasi AR7
Smit

THE KHASI FESTIVAL OF 'POMBLANG'

S. BANERJEE

INTRODUCTION

The Khasi inhabit the upland of the central part of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam. They reckon descent through mother and the youngest daughter (Ka khadduh) of the house is the custodian of the ancestral property. Belief in the existence of spirits is strong among them and the causes of diseases are ascertained by taking recourse to the process of divination. They are ruled by different categories of Chief. The *Siem* is the highest official responsible for the administration of the state but a few small states are also governed by *Sirdars* with same powers as vested in the former although does not possess the same status. It is interesting to note that their priest whose rank is next to *Siem*, have also been allowed to perform this secular duties in some of the regions of the Khasi country. The Chief function through their respective council comprising elected members from different administrative units. He is rather subservient to this body as he is liable to be censured or even dismissed, if his activities are not in conformity with the Khasi traditional usage. Most of his directives are implemented through the assistance of his subordinates who are in-charge of various sections of the State. The Khasi place his grievance first to these junior officers for redress and justice, after which an appeal can be preferred to the *Siem* or any other higher officer as the case may be. One of the eminent States of the Khasi people known as Khyriem, where this festival is celebrated, consists of eight units for administrative convenience under the supervision of different grades of officials who participated in this celebration along with the *Siem* as representatives of the people.

The Khasi festival of *Pomblang* (Goat killing) described below used to be celebrated at one time in Shillong when the Khasi states of Khyriem and Mylliem were not separated. The first chief of the Khyriem state U Singh Manik shifted his headquarters to Nongkrem village after partition of the kingdom, which occured before the arrival of the British. He again moved to Langkerdem after a brief stay at the village of Lyngshing. He performed this festival as long as he was there, transferring it again to Nongkrem where he re-settled again. It was celebrated here for a long time and consequently it was named after this village. Although the ruling family had later on shifted its residence about sixty years ago to the present village Smit, during the time of U Klur Singh, Siem, it is performed regularly as *Nongkrem dance* which was observed by the author from 21st June to 25th June, 1955.

OBJECT OF THE FESTIVAL

It is being held every year since the days of U Shillong who was supposed to be the founder of original Khyriem State. They celebrate it to perpetuate his memory and pay homage with a view to ensure rain, good harvest, eliminating diseases and famine. He was worshipped along with other ancestors with view to guide the present Chief in his discharge of his duties and for the welfare of the people.

The house of Siem (iing-sad) where the rites are observed, is considered sacred. It consists of a big-hall (shlur) in the centre, surrounded by rooms. One of these on the north is used as a kitchen room (iing-chetja) where ritual

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

strip of fine silk for the loins, a part of which hangs gracefully as low as the calves in front. No notice is here taken of what has undoubtedly been added and borrowed from their more civilised neighbours in the plains. 291

'MARRIAGE.—The marriageable age for females is from 15 to 18; for males, from 18 to 24. Matrimonial alliances are contracted either through the parents or the living representatives of the families to which the parties belong. The mode of procedure is still very primitive and unceremonious. The bridegroom, escorted by a number of friends and relatives, goes to the house of the bride, where all are feasted and lodged for the night; on the morrow he leads the bride, accompanied by a number of her relatives, to his own house, and entertains the company with dishes of boiled rice and fresh pork. After remaining there a day or two, the newly-married couple return together to the house of the wife, which becomes their future home. Marriage is dissoluble by regular divorce, for any sufficient cause, and often without any assignable reason except mutual dislike or want of issue, the latter being the most common case of all. Marriage with the Khásids is simply a conventional arrangement, with nothing further for its object than the procreation of children; failing that, it is no longer looked upon as a contract permanently binding. Divorce is effected in the presence of eye-witnesses—the parents, or the heads of clans. Five cowries (*kauris*) are produced by the parties and exchanged, then cast away by mutual consent, and the ceremony is over. Parties once divorced can never again contract marriage with each other, but they are at liberty to marry into other families. Polygamy, strictly so called, is not sanctioned by Khási custom. Adultery is looked upon as a serious crime. If the five cowries have not been cast away by mutual consent, both husband and wife are held to be subject to the "matrimonial demon;" and even when either dies in wedlock, the survivor is not at liberty to contract a fresh alliance until he or she pays the family a sum of money as the means of removing the surviving party from subjection to the "matrimonial demon." The husband is a stranger, so to speak, in the family he has entered, and perpetuates the race of others, not his own. The children in all questions of lineage and personal rights follow the mother. There are always two interests in the same family—that of the husband, and that of the wife. Whatever the husband may have earned or acquired in

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21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

on a historical past, different from that of the Khasi proper, the former having been ruled by the powerful, but somewhat Hinduised dynasty of the Jaintia Rajas until the Jaintia Wars of the British; the latter by small independent chiefs. Yet Jaintia social organization appears on the whole to preserve the matrilineal social structure clearer and to be less influenced by plains-acculturation, than that of the Khasi, though a few features of Brahmanical religious observances and also some traces of racial admixture are found in the immediate vicinity of Jowei, the former summer residence of the Jaintia Rajas. Stronger no doubt, than this influence, was that exercised by the British and non-Assamese Indians in the provincial capital Shillong since 1866. Methods of agriculture and other aspects of material civilization differ but little in the Jaintia- and Khasi plateau-areas.

The same cannot be said of both: the Wár-Khasi and Wár-Jaintias. Linguistically their affiliations are with the Khasi or Jaintias respectively, in the plateau-areas. Economically, however, both Wár-groups form a separate pan-leaf cultivating unit in the little accessible steep southern slopes of the Khasi- and Jaintia Hill massif. Both Wár-groups live in the environment of luscious tropical flora and fauna, sharply differentiated from the cool, barren plateau with its perennial winds and the heroic, if solitary beauty of its highland heaths, which forms the background of both the Khasi- and Jaintia plateau-groups.

The age of the Wár-Khasi and -Jaintias, as one independent economic, — and two half-independent dialectical linguistic entities, is an intricate problem. The two Wár-groups subsist on pan-leaf cultivation as a money crop, grown in the thick tree-gardens as creepers; not on food-cultivation, as do the plateau-groups, because there is insufficient space on the steep slopes, for vegetable gardens or -fields. The pan-leaf cultivators therefore depend on food, purchased from outside. The slopes seem to have been uninhabited until not long ago. Yet pan-leaf chewing is such an integral part of Khasi life, that until quite recently, and occasionally even now, a distance between two places is not measured by the number of hours used for walking, but by the number of betelnut- and pan-leaf packages, consumed on the way. Also the common benediction among Khasi expresses the wish that so and so may eat pan in the Garden of God. Yet pan-cultivation and the settlements of the Wár-people as pan-leaf cultivators in the southern slopes seem comparatively young. Pan-cultivation on the plateau is impracticable. It is therefore possible that pan was for a long time only a much valued import article from the plains, bartered against Khasi ore and iron tools, though it is now an export article from the Wár-country, brought to the markets of the plains, by both Wár-Khasi and Wár-Jaintia women and men.

According to a tradition, across which I came among the Nonglamin clan of the Nongmuker village, the ancestors of the present Wár people were on the plateau at a time when no pan-cultivation was going on in the slopes and none of the present big estates of pan-tree gardens was yet held by their present (Wár-) owners. A not distant ancestor of a Nonglamin clan-member who about two or three generations ago told the story to U Siang (one of